

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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O 131715Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6937
WHITE HOUSE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FOR AMB YOUNG FROM AMB BOWDLER, DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PDEV, SF
SUBJECT: CONVERSATIONS WITH SAG

REF: USUN 859,

1. SUMMARY: PROSPECT OF YOU AND DON COMING HERE FOR TALKS
ON NAMIBIA, RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA OFFERS ATTRACTIVE
POSSIBILITIES, BUT WE NEED TO TAKE CAREFUL SOUNDINGS WITH SAG
BEFORE COMMITTING YOU TO VISIT. UMBRELLA FOR TRIP IS
VERY IMPORTANT. LINKING IT TO NAMIBIA QUESTION IN CONTEXT
OF DISCUSSING FINAL PROPOSALS WITH SAG AND SWAPO PROVIDES
GOOD RATIONALE, ALTHOUGH OPTICS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN VIEWPOINT
OF YOUR ATTENDING COUNCIL ON NAMIBIA SESSION ARE NOT GOOD.

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IT COULD BE SUBJECT TO OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC MIS-
INTERPRETATION. IF WE COULD EXPLAIN PRIVATELY TO
SAG THAT YOUR ROLE AT COUNCIL MEETING WILL BE TO ACHIEVE ACTION
WHICH WILL HELP NAMIBIAN NEGOTIATIONS, WE MAY BE ABLE TO AVOID
THIS DIFFICULTY. END SUMMARY.

2. YOUR MESSAGE RAISES SOME VERY INTERESTING POSSIBILITIES

WHICH WE NEED TO WEIGH CAREFULLY. I SENSE THAT VORSTER AND HIS COLLEAGUES PREFER NOT TO GO IT ALONE, AND I DOUBT THEY VIEW THE PROSPECT WITH MUCH CONFIDENCE. DESPITE THEIR SELF-ASSURED BLUSTER AND REJECTION OF "FOREIGN INTERFERENCE," THEY FEAR INCREASING ISOLATION NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE ECONOMIC AND PSYCHOLOGICAL COST, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY SEE CONFLICTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES AS EXACERBATING THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEM. ON THE OTHER HAND THEY REFUSE TO DO THOSE THINGS WHICH WOULD BRING WESTERN SUPPORT. FURTHERMORE, THEY HAVE COMPOUNDED THEIR DIFFICULTIES BY WORKING THEMSELVES (AND THE COUNTRY) INTO A FRAME OF MIND WHERE THE U.S. -- THE ONLY COUNTRY CAPABLE OF HELPING THEM IN CASE OF FURTHER SOVIET ADVENTURES -- IS REGARDED AS IMPLACABLY HOSTILE. FACED WITH THIS SITUATION THEY ARE HUNKERING DOWN IN THE BELIEF THAT THE RISKS OF HOLDING TO THE TENETS OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT ARE NO GREATER THAN THE RISKS OF MOVING TOWARD POWER SHARING WITH BLACKS NOW. WHILE THERE ARE THOSE IN THIS COUNTRY WHO WOULD PREFER TO GAMBLE ON THE LATTER, WE SHOULD NOT OVER-ESTIMATE THEIR STRENGTH OR WILLINGNESS TO CONFRONT VORSTER. SO FAR THEY SHOW NO SIGNS OF DOING SO.

3. WHILE REFUSING TO CONSIDER FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE AT HOME, I BELIEVE VORSTER AND HIS TOP ADVISORS RECOGNIZE THAT DECISIONS ON NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA COULD BE TURNING POINTS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA. THIS IS WHY THEY HAVE KEPT THEIR OPTIONS OPEN. AS THE MOMENT OF TRUTH NEARS,

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PARTICULARLY IN RESPECT TO NAMIBIA, THEY MAY STILL OPT FOR THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION. CERTAINLY SOME IN THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT, PROBABLY INCLUDING PIK BOTHA AND CONNIE MULDER, UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF ENDING THESE TWO SOURCES OF CONFLICT.

THEY WANT TO AVOID ESCALATING SOVIET/CUBAN INVOLVEMENT, THE DRAIN OF THE ASSOCIATED SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY EFFORT, AND THE THREAT OF MORE INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS. MOREOVER, THEY PERCEIVE THAT INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS IN THESE TWO AREAS COULD ENHANCE THE PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS GENERALLY WITH THE WEST.

4. THE FINAL DECISION ON NAMIBIA WILL BE A SIGNAL OF SOUTH AFRICA'S GENERAL STRATEGY IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. A POSITIVE RESPONSE COULD, OF COURSE, ENHANCE THE PROSPECTS FOR GETTING UP STEAM AGAIN ON AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT FOR RHODESIA. REJECTION OF THE WESTERN PROPOSAL, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD INDICATE A WILLINGNESS TO RIDE OUT THE STORMS IN BOTH NAMIBIA AND RHODESIA IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WOULD BE OF SHORT DURATION AND THAT ENOUGH WESTERN AND AFRICAN SUPPORT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING TO MAKE THEM Viable OVER TIME.

5. THE SAG RESPONSE TO THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT IN RHODESIA HAS BEEN POSITIVE BUT RESTRAINED. THEY ARE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE AAP BECAUSE OF THE ROLE ENVISIONED FOR THE POPULAR FRONT AND BECAUSE OF A CONVICTION IT HAS LITTLE OR NO CHANCE OF COMING TO FRUITION. STILL, WHILE THEY HAVE HOPES FOR THE INTERNAL AGREEMENT, THEY ARE AWARE OF THE RISKS AND UNCERTAINTIES INVOLVED AND THEREFORE, I THINK, OPEN TO FURTHER EXPLORATION OF THE ISSUE WITH US. SOME SOUTH AFRICAN LEADERS PERCEIVE THAT REGIONAL STABILITY IS AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT FOR SOUTH AFRICA TO BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH ITS FUNDAMENTAL DOMESTIC PROBLEM. ONE OF THE CORE PRECEPTS OF THE NATIONALIST WELTANSHAUNG IS THAT SOUTH AFRICA NEEDS TO BUY TIME TO PACIFY THE DOMESTIC SITUATION AND MOVE AHEAD WITH THE EVOLUTION OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. THUS, WHILE THEY WOULD

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CONTINUE TO TRY TO LINK THEIR COOPERATION ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES WITH MORE TOLERANCE FOR THEIR DOMESTIC POLICIES, THE PROMISE OF REGIONAL STABILITY ITSELF IS A STRONG INCENTIVE TO MAINTAIN THEIR BASIC INTEREST IN COOPERATION.

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EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

FOR AMB YOUNG FROM AMB BOWDLER, DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE

6. I SEE THE REOPENING OF THE DIALOGUE ON SOUTH AFRICA AS DIFFICULT AT BEST BUT WORTH EXPLORING. DESPITE THE RHETORIC AGAINST US, VORSTER REALIZES THAT WE ARE THE KEY IN TERMS OF WESTERN ATTITUDES TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA AND DEFENSE AGAINST SOVIET ENCROACHMENT IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD. YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH HIS REPEATED STATEMENTS DURING 1976 THAT THE US IS THE LEADER AND DEFENDER OF THE WEST AND, AS SUCH, OF SOUTH AFRICA AS WELL. OVER THE PAST YEAR HE HAS CHANGED THAT TUNE, INCREASINGLY MOVING TOWARD THE VIEW THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS IMPLACABLY HOSTILE. PART OF THIS ATTITUDE, OF COURSE, IS GENERATED BY TACTICAL POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS WE SAW DURING THE RECENT ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. BUT I THINK IT IS ALSO A GROWING PERSONAL

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CONVICTION REFLECTED IN THE TONE OF HIS LAST TWO LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT AND IN HIS RELATIONS WITH ME AFTER THE EVENTS OF OCTOBER 19. I WOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE, THEREFORE, THE DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING A DIALOGUE STARTED WITH HIM AND I HAVE NO CERTAINTY THAT ONCE UNDERWAY THEY WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW EVENTS SINCE THE VIENNA MEETING HAVE SOFTENED NAT THINKING ON THE NEED FOR BASIC CHANGE. THE OUTWARD SIGNS WOULD INDICATE NOT MUCH. AS YOU ARE AWARE, THERE IS A DANGER THAT VORSTER WILL TRY TO BARGAIN WHAT HE MIGHT BE WILLING TO DO FOR WHAT HE WANTS FROM US. WE OBVIOUSLY CANNOT GET INTO A QUID-PRO-QUO SITUATION ON DOMESTIC REFORMS. NEVERTHELESS, I THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO TEST THE ATMOSPHERE TO SEE HOW MUCH INTEREST THERE IS AND WHAT AREAS MIGHT BE PROPITIOUS.

7. THE MOST IMMEDIATE PAYOFF OF YOUR VISIT COULD BE ITS IMPACT ON THE SAG DECISION ON NAMIBIA, ASSUMING THAT IT HAS NOT ALREADY BEEN MADE. THE SOUTH AFRICANS MAY WISH TO MOVE TO THAT DECISION RATHER SOON AFTER THE WESTERN PROPOSAL IS PRESENTED TO THEM ON MARCH 18. THE BEST TIME FOR YOUR ARRIVAL WOULD BE ON THE HEELS OF THAT PRESENTATION AND BEFORE YOU PROCEED TO LUSAKA FOR THE COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA MEETINGS. IF BOTHA WOULD LIKE TO FIND A WAY TO SUPPORT ACCEPTANCE OF THE PROPOSAL, A DISCUSSION WITH YOU COULD BE OF VALUE TO HIM IN ARGUING THE CASE BEFORE THE NAT LEADERSHIP.

8. THE OTHER PAY-OFF WOULD BE TO SOUND OUT PIK BOTHA AND CONNIE MULDER ON A DIALOGUE COVERING USG/SAG RELATIONS.

I DOUBT WHETHER AT THIS STAGE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO TRY TO SEE VORSTER UNLESS ONE OF THEM SO COUNSELS. MY ESTIMATE IS THAT INITIALLY CONVERSATIONS AT AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO PRODUCE FAVORABLE RESULTS. WE NEED TO DO SOME DE-
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FROSTING BEFORE REPAIR OPERATIONS CAN START. IT IS NOT INCONCEIVABLE THAT IF THESE INITIAL TALKS TO WELL, THEY MIGHT BE CONTINUED IN NEW YORK ON THE NEXT ROUND.

9. WITH RESPECT TO MECHANICS, I BELIEVE I SHOULD CONSULT PIK BOTHA ABOUT YOUR COMING IN ORDER TO SEE WHETHER IT WOULD BE WELL RECEIVED. YOUR GOING TO THE COUNCIL ON NAMIBIA SESSION COULD BE MISINTERPRETED HERE BECAUSE OF ATTITUDES TOWARD THAT UN BODY WITH WHICH YOU ARE FAMILIAR. HOWEVER, I THINK THIS CAN BE TAKEN CARE OF BY EXPLAINING THAT YOU ARE GOING TO LUSAKA TO TALK TO SWAPO AND TO USE YOUR INFLUENCE WITH THE COUNCIL TO ACHIEVE A RESULT HELPFUL TO THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE PUBLIC BASIS FOR THE VISIT SHOULD BE NAMIBIA, AND POSSIBLY RHODESIA. I COULD LET PIK KNOW THAT YOU WOULD ALSO BE INTERESTED IN REVIEWING OUR RELATIONS IN GENERAL WHILE YOU ARE HERE. ONCE ON THE GROUND YOU COULD HAVE OTHER CONTACTS, PARTICULARLY CONNIE MULDER. YOU WILL RECALL THE CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION YOU HAD WITH HIM LAST YEAR. HE HAS GAINED IN STANDING WITH THE RECENT CABINET SHIFTS. SO AS TO AVOID GIVING PIK GROUNDS FOR RESENTMENT, OVER YOUR SEEING HIS ARCH RIVAL, WE COULD INCLUDE AMONG YOUR CONTACTS PEOPLE LIKE PETE KOORNHOF, GERRIT VILJOEN AND S.P. BOTHA. I THINK THAT THE WAY YOU HANDLE THE VISIT WILL TAKE CARE OF ANY DANGER THAT IT WOULD BE INTERPRETED AS OVEREAGERNESS.

10. I WILL AWAIT FURTHER WORD FROM YOU. IN THE MEANTIME THANKS FOR YOUR GENEROUS REMARKS. THIS IS A TEAM EFFORT AND WHAT WE ARE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH REFLECTS THE DEDICATION AND SKILL OF A COUNTRY TEAM REPRESENTING SEVERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.
BOWDLER

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